

China, USSR answer Nixon move

By Richard E. Ward

China and the Soviet Union both have vigorously denounced the U.S. blockade and new aggressive attacks against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The two socialist powers have vowed to continue all-out support of the Vietnamese liberation struggle.

The Soviet and Chinese statements did not indicate what measures they might take to counter the U.S. escalation, but the clear implication was that they would do whatever was necessary to maintain economic and military assistance to North Vietnam without getting into a direct military confrontation with the U.S.

In a statement published in the May 11 People's Daily, Peking's "Commentator" wrote along the same lines as an official government statement, saying in part:

Total support to the end

"The Chinese people and the Vietnamese people are close comrades-in-arms. . . . The 700 million Chinese people provide a powerful backing for the Vietnamese people: the vast expanse of China's territory is their reliable rear area. The Chinese people regard it their bounden duty to support and assist the three Indochinese peoples. . . . As long as the U.S. imperialist war of aggression against Vietnam and Indochina continues in any form, we shall firmly support the Vietnamese and other Indochinese peoples to carry their war of resistance through to the end and final victory."

The Chinese statements singled out President Nixon by name, while the Soviet response emphasized its condemnation of the U.S. government, although it referred to the May 8 declaration of the American "President." The Soviet government statement of May 11, said in part:

"The U.S. is thus attempting to disrupt existing economic, commercial and other relations between the DRV and other states, to deprive the DRV of the possibility of receiving aid for the peoples of its country to repel American aggression. . . . The actions of the U.S. . . . are being viewed in the Soviet Union as inadmissible. . . . The Soviet people, true to the principles of socialist internationalism, is in solidarity with the struggle of the heroic Vietnamese people. It has rendered and will continue to render the necessary support."

Some Western observers have interpreted the Soviet and Chinese statements as "moderate" reactions, a success for the last Nixon administration's chief foreign policy advisor, Henry Kissinger. However, the facts indicate that the new Nixon-Kissinger strategy of trying to save a war

they have lost in Indochina by internationalizing it into a major power conflict, to be settled behind the backs of the Indochinese people, has been a total failure.

In the first place, the new escalation against the DRV must be understood in the context of the unprecedented offensive by Vietnamese liberation forces, now in its 49th day, and showing no signs of flagging, as the Saigon army and the "pacification" program continue to disintegrate.

U.S. caught unprepared

Although U.S. intelligence agencies predicted that the liberation forces in South Vietnam might mount some minor offensives this year, the timing was unexpected and the magnitude, territorial extent and duration of the offensive—militarily and politically—has been beyond anything U.S. officials could have imagined. For the present offensive in South Vietnam can now be compared with an effort equivalent to the combined Vietnamese victorious offensive against the French at Dienbienphu in 1954 and that against the U.S.-Saigon forces at Tet in 1968.

Saigon's "Vietnamized" armed forces lack the will and morale to meet the current test, on which Nixon claims U.S. prestige rests, although it is only his and Kissinger's reputations that are at stake. As Saigon's best units are being torn to shreds, running from battle or even going over to the other side, the confident U.S. official predictions of a rapid defeat of the liberation forces, heard in the offensive's first days, have been replaced by pessimistic predictions of a long battle with an uncertain outcome.

The gloom in Washington is even deeper than the pessimism conceded in public. What top figures in Washington are discussing privately, it was learned authoritatively by the Guardian, is that the prospects for the Nguyen Van Thieu regime are so poor that it may not survive the current offensive, that the whole repressive puppet apparatus—dependent directly on Thieu and CIA advisors—is in the process of crumbling, and that there is virtually nothing the U.S. can do to save its fascist hirelings in South Vietnam.

Reintroduction of U.S. ground forces could not possibly retrieve the situation. At best, a small ground force could engage in a brief holding action, a Dunkirk-like affair to evacuate U.S. troops, which would be free to leave unhindered if the Nixon administration were willing to sit down and negotiate the precise terms of the just settlement already placed on the table by the Provisional Revolutionary Government. Any large-scale ground action by the U.S. is precluded: it could serve no long-term purpose and the immediate bloodshed would be so great that it would probably finish Nixon's political career, which has already been jeopardized by domestic opposition to his latest escalatory moves.

The blockade of North Vietnam, in effect, is an admission that the intensified air and naval attacks will not succeed. While the White House and Pentagon strategists talk of "interdicting" supplies on the land, something never before accomplished in the history of the air war, the blockade was obviously intended to provoke a confrontation with the Soviet Union and possibly China.

"President Nixon's newest tactics in Indochina derive from a recognition that three years of military and diplomatic maneuvers against the DRV have failed," wrote Max Frankel in the May 10, New York Times.

"Accordingly," continues the Times' analyst, "the tactics combine a military and diplomatic maneuver against a new adversary—the Soviet Union. . . . At bottom,